

An exterior view of George D. Fawcett's proposed UFO museum, as sketched by him and colleagues. Fawcett says North Carolina ranks fourth in UFO sightings among the states, and is a natural site for such a museum — which perhaps could be built in Wilmington.

UFO buff wants museum to land in N.C.

By Ben Sheelmas
Staff Writer

North Carolina might be first in flight, but it's also fourth in unidentified flying objects.

That's what George D. Fawcett thinks. "I figure I can get four or five people behind this thing we call 'the buff,'" he said.

Fawcett, a 57-year-old Lincolnton lawyer and public relations director, has been working with the North Carolina UFO Network (NCFUN) and other members of the private, non-profit organizations to investigate sightings across the state and bring them to the attention of the public.

More recently, however, Fawcett has been trying for a different kind of close encounter. He's been contacting investors about the possibility of a UFO Museum. He even mailed a four-page prospectus to newspapers across the state.

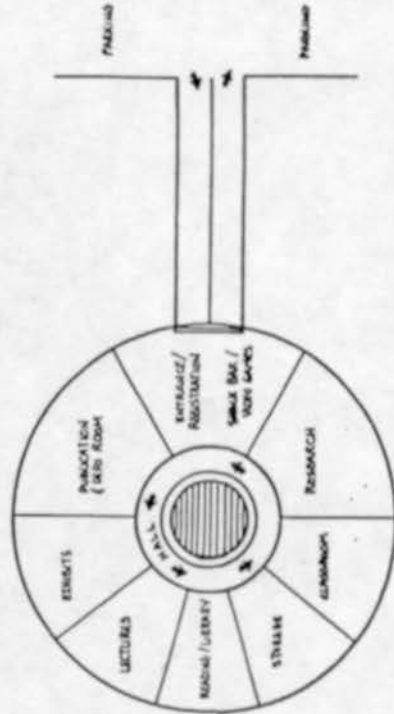
Response, so far, has been tentative at best. "My previous suggestion for a museum to the National Enquirer and to Walt Disney World have been turned down," Fawcett admitted.

The UFO museum would have space for everything from classes, exhibits and lectures to snacks and video games.

For a man who's bucked the conventional wisdom about UFOs for more than 40 years, however, that's hardly daunting.

"The idea's on the edge of growing public interest," he said.

A Mount Airy native, Fawcett traces his interest in UFOs to World War II, when he was an enlisted communications specialist with the



U.S. Army in Panama.

He still has a scrapbook with a newspaper clipping from Dec. 28, 1944, which he'd saved in his attic. The headline read "Silver Balls in Sky Latest Nazi Device."

"When we look over their bases in Japan and Germany, we never found a solution," he said.

After the war, Fawcett attended

'I know I'm fast-talking. It comes from living so long among the Yankees.'

George D. Fawcett, UFO hobbyist

Most Airy and Maiden, N.C.

"I was photographer, columnist and writer — you name it," he said. "I've always been a bit of a jack-of-all-trades. In the Army, the military, the Air Force, the Navy. All that but, however, Fawcett's interest in UFOs remained warm.

He joined UFO organizations, became a volunteer investigator, and taught a course on UFOs for Grant College's Law County extension. He wrote a book about UFO case histories in the Carolinas and Florida.

Books and filing cabinets full of reports, documents and photographs have overflowed his attic, taking up a good deal of space in a small rented room Fawcett operates with his wife.

"It's been a way of life for me," he said.

Almost without taking a breath, Fawcett ran a series of seminars. A 1978 Gallup Poll found that 13 million UFOs, but 40 percent were aware of the phenomenon and that 27 percent believe they were real. North Carolina ranks fourth among the

states in annual UFO sightings. UFOs have been spotted in more than 100 counties, with a worldwide average of 120 sightings a day.

"I know I'm fast-talking," he said. "It comes from living so long among the Yankees. Up there, if you don't stop talking and start walking, you'll freeze to death."

Fawcett thinks his proposed museum will cost between \$2 million and \$3 million. "That's a ball park figure," he emphasized. "We're not really sure yet."

However, he does have a rough design and a rough conception already prepared, with help from fellow UFO enthusiasts Jim Lear and Calvin Byers.

If their concept — a dome-like structure with a long walkway — reminds people of the Starship Enterprise, that's no outlandish.

"It's designed like a UFO," Fawcett said. "We want it to attract attention."

Fawcett hopes to run the museum as a self-supporting, "free enterprise" tourist attraction. His plan includes a meeting room as well as space for a snack bar and gift shop.

"The point is we want to keep the government out of it," he said. "The case we have to be critical of some of the government investigations."

The Air Force and NASA officials to maintain that virtually all UFOs are natural phenomena or the result of hallucinations or visual distortions.

Yet Fawcett said that documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act show that many officials believe UFOs are physical, not natural, and show a high degree of technology.

Fawcett is skeptical of theories like Erich von Däniken's "who jump around 12,000 years" or "modern UFOs" who approach the subject as a kind of religion.

Like other members of MUFON, he tries to follow the methodology of men like J. Allen Hynek, the astronomer who is the best-known academic proponent of the theory that at least UFOs are controlled by intelligent beings.

Sightings are checked separately, with phone interviews and questionnaires. MUFON volunteers will travel to the scene.

Phone calls from UFO devotees in other states often alert Fawcett and his associates to sightings in North Carolina. A UFO bulletin from Washington state, for example, was his first source for a sighting in January at Hamstead.

(The individual who reported the sighting later declined to talk to Moving Star reporters.)

Although Fawcett has contacted businessmen at Blowing Rock, Statesville and Gettysburg, there's no definite backing for the UFO museum as yet, emerged. Nevertheless, he believes his plan is sound.

"I can't deny I've had my times in the clouds from time to time," he said. "But this time, I think my feet are on the ground."

Fawcett can be contacted at 602 Boulevard Road, Lincolnton 28082.